

**HMIE**

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland
Luchd-sgrùdadh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba

Summarised inspection findings

St Andrew's Early Learning and Childcare Class

Falkirk Council

18 August 2026

HM Inspectors gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the ELC's work using three quality indicators from the Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors. This document provides our summarised findings.

Key contextual information

St Andrew’s Early Learning and Childcare Class (ELCC) is a non-denominational setting. It sits within the grounds of St Andrew’s Primary School serving communities in the east of the town of Falkirk. It caters for children aged three to those not yet attending school. It is registered for 64 children. There are currently 67 children on the roll due to shared placements. The nursery is a term-time provision, and children attend between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. The headteacher of the school has overall responsibility for the ELCC. A principal teacher, principal early years officer and an acting senior early years officer manage the day to day running of the ELCC. Further staffing includes seven full time and two part time early years officers, one support for learning assistant and two early learning and childcare assistants. A peripatetic support teacher attends the setting one day per term. The nursery consists of one playroom with direct access to an outdoor area. There is a sensory room. Children make use of part of the playroom for lunches.

Curriculum	good
This quality indicator highlights the importance of placing the needs, interests, rights and progress of children at the centre of curriculum design and implementation. <u>Curriculum</u> is defined as the totality of all that is planned for children from ELC, through school and beyond. It emphasises that children are entitled to a curriculum underpinned by the <u>principles of curriculum design</u> and enriched through meaningful learning experiences indoors, outdoors and within the community. It recognises the need for all children to experience opportunities to develop the interests, knowledge, skills, and attributes they will need to adapt, thrive and achieve in today’s world. This quality indicator also recognises the importance of the curriculum supporting progress in children’s learning as they enter the setting and at key points of transition. The themes are: • curriculum rationale and design • continuity and progression in the curriculum • partnerships • skills for life and learning	

- Staff plan and deliver a play- based curriculum which prioritises children’s emotional needs, interests and motivations. Their planning is informed well by research and national and local authority guidance. Staff use their knowledge of children very effectively to ensure children’s experiences are engaging and meaningful. This is allowing children opportunities to explore, be creative and curious. In recent years, staff have improved the quality of children’s learning experiences through improvements to the learning environment and resources. Whilst children receive a broad curriculum, staff should continue to develop further children’s literacy and numeracy skills during outdoor learning activities. In addition, they should provide children with increased opportunities to use a greater range of technology to enhance their digital skills.
- A few years ago, staff developed their vision, values and aims. Staff identified the need to streamline these to ensure clarity for all stakeholders. Senior leaders should now progress with plans to review and streamline these again alongside the development of a curriculum rationale. In doing so, staff should ensure that children, families and partners are involved in

this review and the outcome leads to a shared understanding for all. This should support all stakeholders to gain a shared understanding of their curriculum which celebrates the uniqueness of their context.

- Staff plan well using children's interests and Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. Children sustain engagement very effectively during learning demonstrating their ability to direct and lead their own learning. Senior leaders should now ensure all staff have a consistent understanding of how to ensure greater challenge for a few children who require this.
- Children access a range of resources outdoors which helps to develop their gross motor skills well. For example, children use the climbing frame and explore loose parts. They visit Callendar Park to learn about nature and identify seasonal changes. They take part in walks in their local environment and discuss environmental print, which supports their awareness of the outdoors. Children have visited the local optician following a visit from an optician to the nursery. Children gain greater relevance and meaning to their learning as a result of these experiences.
- Staff have established very positive relationships with families to support children prior to starting nursery for the first time. They work with families to gather information on children's interests, needs and motivations and use this well to provide appropriate experiences when children start nursery. Parents support their child's learning through stay and play sessions and by attending learning events on areas such as language and communication. A few parents have supported curricular experiences for example, supporting children to learn food preparation skills. Staff use an online communication tool and newsletter to enhance further communication between home and nursery.
- Nursery staff meet with P1 staff as part of transition to school to share a range of information about children such as tracking information and children's learning journals. This helps P1 teachers to build effectively on children's previous learning and support effective progression into P1. Staff ensure children become familiar with the school setting through regular visits to P1, the gym hall and school library.
- Children are given opportunities to develop skills for learning and life. For example, they develop fine motor skills effectively through learning about weaving and sewing and have used produce from the garden to cook. Children learn important skills as they help prepare and organise for snack and lunch. Staff are aware they are at the early stages of developing children's digital skills. Children access the interactive whiteboard, play games and learn early coding skills. Staff should continue, as planned, to develop children's digital skills more progressively as tools for learning.

This quality indicator focuses on how children benefit from access to high quality spaces and well-established routines that help them feel secure and ready to engage. It explores how children are supported to build positive relationships, regulate their emotions, and purposefully participate in a wide range of motivating learning experiences. It demonstrates the importance of staff having a high level of skill supported by strong pedagogical leadership. This includes a clear understanding of pedagogy, the concept of play, how children learn, children's rights and children's behaviour.

It places value on high quality relationships, consistent expectations, and skilled interactions that enable children to sustain engagement, follow routines, and build independence in their learning. This indicator highlights the importance of observing and interacting sensitively with children to plan and assess their learning. It recognises the value of involving children fully in planning their learning indoors, outdoors and within the local community. This quality indicator emphasises the importance of robust tracking and monitoring of children's progress to ensure practitioners know all children very well as learners.

The themes are:

- children's learning and engagement
- interactions to support learning
- planning and assessment
- tracking and monitoring

- Staff have developed positive and trusting relationships with children and families. Children learn in a warm and welcoming family ethos which supports them to settle and sustain learning very well. All staff model kind, respectful relationships highly effectively. This has resulted in children demonstrating kindness and respect in their interactions with adults and each other. Almost all children feel valued, understood and are fully engaged in their learning. Children benefit from the clear and consistent routines that are in place which is supporting all children to feel confident in the setting.
- Staff encourage children to be curious and inquisitive. Children demonstrate high levels of engagement and sustain their play very well. Almost all children make decisions about where they want to play, often revisiting learning such as in the sewing area. Children explore enthusiastically in areas such as block play, mark making and through role play activities. Staff ensure ease of access to learning materials and resources and children demonstrate their independence as they access these.
- Staff's interactions support children very well to manage their emotions and relationships as they play and learn together. Staff make use of questioning techniques and supportive commentary and conversations effectively during interactions with children. This helps to deepen their learning, for example, during story time and in science activities.
- Staff plan responsively for children's learning. Staff meet weekly to discuss significant observations and individual children's interests. This is ensuring all staff have a shared understanding of what children already know and can do. Staff use this information very well to plan responsive experiences effectively for almost all children. They should continue to

enhance further their approaches to intentional planning across all curriculum areas. They should also consider ways to share planning with families to support involvement further in their child's learning.

- Staff record experiences and significant learning observations using an online platform which is accessed by families. Families share children's learning and achievements from home, which are celebrated within the setting. A few children have worked with staff to develop a growing awareness of their own next steps to support their learning. Children enjoy accessing paper copies of their online journal in the setting, often sharing and discussing these with their peers. This allows children to have ownership of their learning and meaningful personal reflections.
- Senior leaders meet with key workers three times a year to monitor and track individual children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They use local authority assessment and progression frameworks well to support this. Staff use this information well to plan learning targets to meet children's needs.

Wellbeing, inclusion and equality	very good
This quality indicator highlights the importance of positive relationships and children's wellbeing. It recognises the importance of providing high quality, inclusive, and appropriate rights-based support. These approaches result in improved outcomes for children's learning, wellbeing and participation. It takes full account of children who may require additional support to access and benefit fully from their entitlement to high quality ELC. This includes identifying and assessing their learning and wellbeing needs in a timely manner and providing personalised and targeted support. This quality indicator recognises that strong, collaborative partnership working between those supporting children is essential. It highlights the importance of meaningful engagement with children and families to inform decisions about how children's needs should be met. This quality indicator emphasises the important role senior leaders play in ensuring all staff have relevant and worthwhile professional learning to meet the diverse and sometimes complex needs of children. The themes are: • positive relationships and wellbeing • universal support • Identifying and assessing learning needs and targeted support • inclusion and equality	

- Staff have created a warm, nurturing and welcoming ethos in the nursery. They place high importance on ensuring positive relationships with children and families. All staff are highly attuned to children's needs and use questioning very well to support children to understand and manage their emotions. Staff should continue with plans to broaden the range of strategies they use to support children to talk about their emotions, such as the use of visuals. Staff make good use of praise and encouragement to build children's self-confidence. Children are very happy and calm. They demonstrate kindness to their peers on a daily basis such as showing empathy and including their peers in play. Staff talk regularly with children about the wellbeing indicators, for example, reminding them of how to keep safe or be healthy. Staff should now continue to develop their approaches to embedding children's rights further across the setting.
- Staff offer a home visit to all new children which supports effectively, smooth transitions into the setting. This allows staff to build a strong relationship with each family at an early stage and to understand each child within their family context. A few children attend the setting as part of a shared placement with other childcare providers. Staff ensure regular communication with the partner providers to share information about children's individual needs.
- Children's attendance at nursery is very positive and parents inform staff of the reasons for their child's absence. Senior leaders monitor children's attendance regularly to identify trends and patterns and follow local guidance to manage any concerns around absence.

- Children's views are recorded in floor books and through observations captured online. Children have regular opportunities to make decisions in the setting, they confidently choose to go outside or stay indoors and select resources to play with. Children have opportunities to be mealtime helpers and enjoy preparing and setting up snack for their peers. Children experience opportunities to be independent at snack and lunchtime, self-serving food and washing their dishes. Staff engage with children during these times using interactions effectively. This is supporting children to engage with one another positively.
- All children are well supported and encouraged to engage in a wide range of learning experiences in thoughtfully planned spaces, both, indoors and outdoors. Children benefit from daily opportunities for fresh air and physical activity. They enjoy playing on the climbing frame, using bikes, sensory outdoor play and using a tree swing.
- Staff support children who require additional support with their learning very well. They meet with relevant partners to discuss children's needs and ensure appropriate strategies and actions are identified. Families and partners are fully involved in reviewing children's progress to inform future learning and support. Senior leaders should continue to provide bespoke support for all new children who demonstrate barriers to learning. Staff have recently created a new sensory space for all children to use which supports individual children's needs effectively through targeted approaches.
- Staff have a very good understanding of the diversity of children's family backgrounds, languages and cultures. They promote and celebrate different cultures and beliefs effectively. As a result, children benefit from playing and learning in an environment that promotes highly effectively, equality and inclusion.

Safeguarding

- The setting submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the setting and the education authority.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard HMIE terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.

On behalf of His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.